

all the more unusual. It suggests that additional material of the Malabigambo population should be carefully studied for slight, but significant average subspecific characters. If the isolation of this eastern segment of the species has been of sufficient duration, one might expect some incipient differentiation to have taken place.

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The nest and eggs of *Arachnothera chrysogenys*

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In 1909 the British Museum (Natural History) received from Dr. C. Hose a small collection of nests and eggs from Sarawak, consisting mainly of those of swiftlets, *Collocalia* spp., but including a nest, clutch of two eggs, and female skin with the bill broken off short, of a spiderhunter, *Arachnothera* species. The specimen was from Claudetown, Baram, Sarawak, dated 9th September, and Hose had tentatively labelled it as *A. modesta* (now *A. affinis modesta*) and marked it with a query. On receipt the nest and eggs were registered under this name and put into the respective collections, the damaged skin remaining unregistered and being left tied to the nest. Recently the nest was re-examined and the skin was checked against those in the collection and found to be that of the Lesser Yellow-eared Spiderhunter, *Arachnothera chrysogenys*, presumably of the race *A. c. harrissoni* Deignan, 1957. The nest and eggs of this species do not appear to have been described.

As with all *Arachnothera* species the nest (B. M. no. N.68.1.) is attached to the underside of a large leaf; in this case of some monocotyledonous plant, the leaf, now a little split and shrivelled but long, slender, and lanceolate, and probably about 80 cms. long and about 18 cms. wide when fresh. The nest is an elongated structure with a rounded outline, looking like a cocoon, and attached along the leaf which appears to have curved upwards and outwards in life so that the nest entrance, which is set distally towards the tip of the leaf, would have been a little higher than the egg-chamber which is towards the other end of the elongated nest.

The nest is sewn to the leaf with fine strands of a fibrous cotton-like material, the ends of which have been thrust through the leaf from below, to show as small blobs about a millimetre in diameter on the upper surface

of the leaf, the cut edges of each hole having presumably closed together to grip the material as the bill was withdrawn. There is an irregular row of 'stitches' on either side of the leaf towards the entrance end of the nest, but at the proximal end and around the nest-chamber they are more numerous, occurring in small groups. The nest is *c.* 39 cms. long, *c.* 13 cms. broad at the broadest part just anterior to the nest-chamber, *c.* 11 cms. broad in the region of the nest-chamber, and *c.* 7 cms. deep. Although it shows a close similarity to the nest of the Long-billed Spiderhunter, *A. robusta*, as described and depicted by Gibson-Hill (1949-50) it is not 'bottle-shaped' like the nest of that species but more suggestive of the hull of a boat, being rounded in cross-section and flattened dorsally by the leaf-surface, tapering towards the entrance but broadening as it approaches the nest-chamber and then tapering very slightly towards the rather rounded proximal end. Even allowing for the tendency of the leaf edges to shrivel and roll up, and for possible compression in packing for transport, there is nothing to suggest any real distortion of the original shape.

The outer, main, structure is of coarse, reddish brown fibrous material, very loosely woven but tough enough to form a resilient layer 2-3 cms. thick. One or two tiny fragments of moss are present. The coarser fibrous material suggests the remains of rotted leaf bases of the type often found on the trunks of palm-like plants. There is no roof and the structure is made so that the sides extend up to the under surface of the leaf which forms the roof.

The nest-chamber is actually a secondary cup-nest built within the space formed by the outer structure. It is of fibrous material similar to that of the outer structure but omitting the coarser material to give a softer and more compact mass. It is a solid pad of material that appears to be *c.* 4 cms. thick, *c.* 18 cms. long, and *c.* 8 cms. broad. There is a centrally placed, slightly elliptical cup *c.* 3.5 cms. deep and *c.* 5-7 cms. across. It is difficult to assess the space available above the cup in the original nest-site but there appears to be a broad groove across the side of this structure from the cup, on the side nearest the entrance, which might have aided access to the cup or might have been caused by pressure from the leaf-stalk over a period in a collection.

The eggs are matt white, and the larger end of each is wreathed with a narrow zone of hair-fine black lines, looking like a tangled and knotted skein, with a few scattered black spots in it. There are a few minute white nodules on the surface of the larger end. One egg measures 21.9 x 15.1 mm.; the other is cracked (B. M. nos. 1909. 10. 31. 1-2).

The original label on the skin states 'this bird lays but two eggs generally, but sometimes three. It seldom brings up more than one young one. Nest hanging to a leaf. Eggs white, with web-like lines around the thick end'.

Both nest and eggs resemble those of the Long-billed Spiderhunter, *A. robusta*, (Gibson-Hill 1949-50) and differ from the suspended cup-shaped nests described for other species.

Reference:

Gibson-Hill, C. A. 1949-50. The nest and eggs of the Long-billed Spiderhunter, *Arachnothera r. robusta* Müll. & Schleg. *Bull. Raffles Mus.* Singapore 21: 129-131.